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IS MICRONESIA A SUITABLE ALTERNATIVE
FOR OKINAWA?

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15 October 1973

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USAWC RESEARCH ELEMENT
(Essay)

IS MICRONESIA A SUITABLE ALTERNATIVE
FOR OKINAWA?

by

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ABSTRACT

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The basic question of whether or not Micronesia is a suitable alternative for Okinawa in its present state was examined on two bases, military and political. Data was gathered using a literature search. It was concluded that Micronesia is suitable from a military viewpoint because of its strategic location and because it has islands large enough to accommodate all of the existing United States military facilities on Okinawa. It was also concluded that Micronesia is suitable from a political viewpoint because the United States is assured of the use of Micronesia for military bases. It was recommended that the United States should plan to use selected islands of Micronesia along with Guam as its forward defense position in the western Pacific. It was also recommended that the United States should work for some form of political association with Micronesia.

I. INTRODUCTION

In recognition of rising pressures in Japan and Okinawa for an end to United States rule in Okinawa, the United States on 15 May 1972 peacefully returned Okinawa to Japan. While the United States retained a military presence on Okinawa, the use of American bases is now subject to the same restrictions as those bases remaining in Japan. These restrictions have limited the United States military use of Okinawa so that it no longer qualifies as the mainstay of the United States defenses in the western Pacific and as the vital forward staging area it was during the Korean and Vietnam Wars. Moreover, because of emotional and political pressures to get the United States out of Okinawa and the Nixon Doctrine of reducing United States presence in Asia and of relying on Japan to play a bigger defensive role in the area, the complete withdrawal from American bases in Okinawa is merely a matter of time.

The question is where can the United States withdraw to? Where can the United States fall back to? Will the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (TTPI) commonly known as Micronesia be the place to withdraw to? Is Micronesia a suitable alternative for Okinawa? The purpose of this paper is to determine whether it is on two bases, military and political. For the purpose of this paper Micronesia will be limited to what is known as TTPI and Okinawa will be examined in its present state.

II. OKINAWA IN ITS PRESENT STATE

A. Description

Okinawa is located four hundred miles off the China coast.¹ It is an island 69 miles long and 2½ to 19 miles wide, with an area of 454 square miles and a population of some 850,000 Okinawans.² It is the largest and most important island of the Ryuku-Daito island chain, an archipelago which extends four hundred miles from Kyushu towards the northeastern shores of Taiwan.³

Okinawa was seized by American forces in 1945 during the last great battle of the war in the Pacific.⁴ During 27 years of American rule a military complex valued at two billion dollars was built on Okinawa.⁵ As a consequence Okinawa became the strongest bastion of United States military power in the western Pacific.⁶

B. Status

On 15 May 1972 Okinawa became a Japanese prefecture when the United States returned it to Japan, in recognition of rising pressures in Japan for an end to United States rule in Okinawa.⁷ Under the Okinawan Revision Pact, the United States retained a number of bases on Okinawa, but these bases were subject to the same restrictions as other bases remaining in Japan:

Major changes in the deployment into Japan of United States armed forces, major changes in their equipment, and the use of facilities and areas in

Japan as bases for military combat operations to be undertaken from Japan other than those conducted under Article V of the said Treaty [of Mutual Cooperation and Security between Japan and the United States of America signed at Washington on 19 January 1960] shall be the subjects of prior consultation with the Government of Japan.⁸

Thus with the reversion of Okinawa to Japan, the United States has lost some of its military flexibility in the western Pacific. Prior consultation [agreement] with the Japanese government is now required: (1) Before movements of Army or Air Force troops of one division or more into Japan; (2) before introduction of nuclear weapons or construction of nuclear bases; and (3) before bases can be used to launch combat operations outside of Japan.⁹

"The combat effectiveness of America's most strategic island fortress in Asia has been sharply reduced."¹⁰ Increased reliance must be made of Guam and other bases in the western Pacific where the United States will have a free hand.¹¹

C. United States Military Bases and Forces in Okinawa

United States has retained 88 military facilities on Okinawa, 14 major ones. Forty-six bases have been returned to Japan. These facilities serve as "bases for tactical and reconnaissance jet aircraft, air-to-air refueling planes, Air Force combat units, the Pacific Fleet's Marine force, Army supply operations, psychological warfare and Special Forces troops and a small Navy unit."¹²

Scheduled for the present to remain as part of the

United States force in East Asia are 9,700 airmen, 19,000 marines, 10,800 soldiers, and 1,700 sailors.¹³

D. Pressure for Reduction or Removal of Okinawan Bases

There are emotional and political pressures to get the United States out of Okinawa. A recent newspaper poll revealed that 77.8 per cent of the Okinawans wanted the bases eliminated or reduced in size.¹⁴ Public sentiment for the elimination or reduction of United States bases in Okinawa is strong because of the scarcity of land and because of the highly visible American presence. The United States military still occupies about twenty per cent of Okinawa's limited real estate.¹⁵ Some of its bases are in the midst of densely populated areas. Pressure is building for the return of more land. Land is wanted for civilian housing, parks, and roads. A senior Japanese official said that "The U.S. military presents problems. Both the Okinawan and central governments are anxious to have the base presence reduced."¹⁶ Thus it will be only a matter of time before the United States completely withdraws from Okinawa.

III. MICRONESIA--IN GENERAL

A. Description

Although Micronesia includes TTPI, Guam and the Gilbert Islands, TTPI is commonly known as Micronesia. For the purpose of this paper Micronesia will be limited to what is

known as TTPI.

TTPI comprises the three major island groups of the Marianas (except Guam), the Marshalls, and the Carolines. It is made up of over 2,100 islands of varying sizes, scattered in an area of the western Pacific Ocean north of the equator about the size of the Continental United States, or some three million square miles.¹⁷ The islands lie between Hawaii and the Asian Continent and stretch 2,675 miles east to west and for 1,300 miles north to south. The islands have a total land area of a little over seven hundred square miles, or roughly half the size of the state of Rhode Island. Less than one hundred of the islands are inhabited.¹⁸

Total population at the end of fiscal year 1972 was 114,645. The distribution of the population in the six administrative districts was as follows: Truk District, 32,732; Marshall District, 24,248; Ponape District, 23,723; Mariana District, 13,381; Palau District, 13,025; and Yap District, 7,536.¹⁹

The peoples of Micronesia vary greatly in culture and language although they are commonly referred to as Micronesians. They represent a variety of cultures defined largely by geographical boundaries. They include the Chamorros of the Marianas, the Palauans of Palau, the Yapese of Yap, the Trukese, Ponapeans, and Kusaiteans of the eastern Carolines, the Polynesians of the Kapingamarangi and Nukuroro Atolls; and the Marshalese of the Marshalls.²⁰

Nine major distinctly different languages with regional

dialect variations, are spoken in Micronesia: Chamorro, Palauan, Yapese, Trukese, Ponapean, Marshallese, Ulithi-Woleai, Kusaiean, and Kapingamarangi-Nukuoro. "These languages are in everyday use and most people know only the language of their home island."²¹

B. Status

Micronesia is a United Nations strategic trusteeship administered by the United States under a Trusteeship Agreement concluded with the Security Council on 18 July 1947. Pertinent provisions of the Agreement are: (1) Micronesia was designated as a strategic area and place under trusteeship. (2) The United States was designated as the administering authority. (3) The United States is entitled to establish naval, military, and air bases and to employ armed forces in Micronesia. (4) The United States agreed to foster the development of such political institutions as are suited to Micronesia and to promote the development of the inhabitants of Micronesia toward self-government or independence as may be appropriate to the particular circumstances of Micronesia and its peoples and the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned. (5) The United States agreed to promote the economic advancement and self-sufficiency of the inhabitants. (6) The United States may close from time to time any specified areas for security reasons. (7) The terms can not be altered, amended or terminated without the consent of the United States.²²

C. Government

The responsibility for the actual administration of Micronesia is in the Department of the Interior. It is administratively divided into six districts: Palau, Yap, Truk, and Ponape, within the Carolines archipelago; the Marshall Islands; and the Mariana Islands.²³

Executive authority is vested in a High Commissioner appointed by the President of the United States and confirmed by the United States Senate. His headquarters is at Saipan, Mariana Islands District.²⁴ Legislative authority is vested in an elected bicameral Congress of Micronesia (COM) consisting of a Senate and a House of Representatives.²⁵ Judicial authority is vested in the High Court of Micronesia whose three justices are appointed by the Secretary of the Interior.²⁶

Public finances are provided in an annual budget that is met by funds appropriated by the United States Congress and by local revenue collections. In fiscal year 1972, the United States provided \$60,080,000, while Micronesia provided \$3,732,962, which is less than ten per cent of the budget.²⁷

D. Economy

The economy of Micronesia is not self-sufficient. The gross product of Micronesia is derived largely from United States funded expenditures for services and capital improvement and from tourism, copra, fishing, farming, handicrafts,

and scrap.²⁸ Land, natural resources, labor, capital, and infrastructure basic to development are scanty and are scattered over many islands.²⁹ There is a great disparity between imports and exports. In 1972 imports amounted to \$26.3 million, while exports amounted to \$2.68 million.³⁰ In short the economy of Micronesia is not able to support the minimum needs of the population.

IV. MICRONESIA--MILITARILY SUITABLE

A. Micronesia is Militarily Valuable to United States

Micronesia is militarily valuable to the United States for the following reasons: (1) Strategic location; (2) sufficient land area available to support a complex of military bases; (3) dispersion of islands; (4) military use of Micronesia is in consonant with the Nixon Doctrine; (5) provide future base sites on the threshold of Asia; (6) denial to enemy is of strategic value to the United States; and (7) relative permanence of United States control.

Micronesia's geographical location in the western Pacific is strategic. An examination of a map of the Pacific clearly indicates its strategic location. The islands of Micronesia are on the United State line of communications to the Philippines, Japan, and continental Asia. They are astride the air and sea routes between the United States and Southeast Asia in the western Pacific. They are on the threshold of Asia. They are out of range of China's inter-

mediate-range ballistic missiles, yet close enough to function as a forward defense position for the United States.

Micronesia has sufficient land area available to support a complex of military bases. For example, Babelthnap in Palau District has an area of 153 square miles;³¹ Saipan in Mariana District has an area of 46.58 square miles;³² Tinian in Mariana District has an area of 39.29 square miles;³³ and Kwejalein Atoll in Marshall District has an area of 6.33 miles and a lagoon area of 839 square miles.³⁴ Japan constructed military, air force and naval bases in Yap, the Palaus, Truk and Ponape in the Carolines, Saipan and Tinian in the Marianas, and Jaluit, Kwajalein, Eniwetok, Wotje and Maloelap in the Marshalls.³⁵

The widely scattered islands of Micronesia provides needed dispersion in the nuclear age. By using several islands to support a complex of military bases instead of concentrating on a single island such as Guam, an enemy would find it extremely difficult to destroy United States defenses with a single coordinated nuclear attack. The value of a surprise enemy nuclear attack would be greatly diminished as all bases must be hit nearly simultaneously by nuclear bombs or missiles in order to gain the value of surprise that is necessary for a nuclear victory.³⁶

Military use of Micronesia would be in consonant with the Nixon Doctrine of reducing American presence in Asia and placing greater reliance on the part of our Asian allies to defend themselves, yet being close enough to help them and

to provide them with a nuclear shield.³⁷ Military use of Micronesia would allow the United States to pull back from Asia yet preserve the United States strategic position and credibility in Asia.

With the potential loss of base rights in Japan and the Philippines due to the increasing pressure within Japan and the Philippines for the return of United States bases, the United States must look elsewhere in the Pacific for future base sites. Micronesia is the only area under United States control which is available to provide future base sites on the threshold of Asia. Guam is not big enough for all future needs. Guam is already being used as a major air base, a support center for Polaris submarines, and a big naval supply base.³⁸ Hawaii is too far to the rear of United States defense commitments in Asia. Wake and Midway are not large enough to support modern military military complexes.³⁹

Bases on Micronesia would "extend the range of U.S. sea and air power by thousands of miles, yet are not close enough to the continent of Asia to be militarily vulnerable or politically provocative."⁴⁰ "U.S. planners regard the area as vital to maintaining bomber, submarine, and surface vessel fleets in the Orient."⁴¹

Military facilities could be built in Micronesia to service and maintain the Navy and Air Force in Asia. Also for troop staging, logistics, and missile bases. Except for Guam, the islands of Micronesia are the only forward-base sites in the Pacific that might substitute in part for

Okinawa, the Philippines and Japan.⁴²

Even were no military base facilities developed in Micronesia the denial of Micronesia to a hostile power could be of strategic value to the United States.⁴³ The islands of Micronesia are not only approaches from America to Asia, but also approaches from Asia to America. In addition Guam would be protected as well as the United States line of communications to the Philippines, Japan and continental Asia.

The relative permanence of United States control over Micronesia adds to the military value of Micronesia.⁴⁴ The United States has control of Micronesia under a Trusteeship Agreement with the Security Council of the United Nations. The terms of the Agreement can not be altered, amended or terminated without the consent of the United States. In addition the United States has a veto in the Security Council which could be used to protect its control of Micronesia. Thus while base privileges in Okinawa, Japan, and the Philippines may be withdrawn, this is not likely to happen in Micronesia.

B. Strategic Importance of Micronesia is Recognized

Japan recognized Micronesia's strategic importance. It fortified the islands and used them as bases for aggression to the south and east. Later it used the island bases as a great barrier to the liberation of the Philippines, Wake, and Guam.⁴⁵

United States recognized its strategic importance. It

fought its way through Kwajalein, Eniwetok, Saipan, Tinian, Peleliu and Anguar at a cost of 6,288 Americans killed in islands battles to defeat the Japanese.⁴⁶ It used the airfields on Saipan and Tinian to bomb Tokyo and other Japanese targets.⁴⁷

United Nations recognized its strategic importance. The Security Council designated it as a strategic area and placed it under trusteeship. It is the only strategic trusteeship ever made by the United Nations.⁴⁸ The United States was designated as administering authority and given the right to establish and use military facilities in Micronesia for the maintenance of international peace and security and to exclude other nations from specified security areas.⁴⁹

C. United States Military Land Requirements

The United States has the following minimum military land requirements in Micronesia:

1. Within Kwajalein Atoll, continuing rights for the use of those lands and waters currently controlled as part of the Kwajalein Missile Range.⁵⁰
2. Two-thirds of Tinian for a combined military, harbor, air base, supply complex and training center.⁵¹
3. Four options in Palau Islands
 - a. To acquire forty acres for use within Malakal Harbor for a small naval facility.
 - b. To acquire ~~two~~ thousand acres in order to

- build a logistics installation on Babelthaup.
- c. To use thirty thousand acres for intermittent ground force training and maneuvers.
- d. For the joint use of a civil airfield and the right to improve that airfield to meet military requirements.⁵²

D. Conclusion

Micronesia is a suitable military alternative for Okinawa because of its strategic location and because it has islands large enough to accomodate all of the existing United States military facilities on Okinawa. Its strategic location astride the air and sea routes between the United States and Southeast Asia and at the threshold of Asia makes it an ideal fall back position from Okinawa. Although not as close to the Asian mainland as Okinawa, bases in Micronesia would serve to maintain the United States strategic position and credibility in Asia. Restriction on the use of Okinawan bases and the possibility of complete withdrawal from Okinawa in the near future makes Micronesia important to America's strategic position in the western Pacific.

V. POLITICAL SUITABILITY OF MICRONESIA

A. History of Micronesia Status Negotiations

The political suitability of Micronesia will depend in large part on what will be the future political status of Micronesia as the status will determine whether Micronesia

will be available to the United States for military use.

The Joint Committee on Future Status (JCFS) of the COM and the United States have engaged in six rounds of negotiations on the future political status of Micronesia since October 1969. The sixth round was held from 28 September to 6 October 1972 at Barbours Point, Hawaii. During this period of time the following significant events occurred in the order stated: (1) Commonwealth status offer of the United States was rejected by the COM in a split vote. (2) United States agreed to enter separate status negotiations with the representatives of Marianas. (3) United States and JCFS tentatively agreed on the language for a preamble and three titles (Internal Affairs, Foreign Affairs, and Defense) of a draft Compact of Free Association. (4) COM adopted a resolution instructing the JCFS to negotiate an independence option in addition to continuing negotiations toward free association with the United States.⁵³

In June 1973 a tentative agreement under which the Marianas would become a part of the United States with commonwealth status was reached between the Marianas Political Status Commission and the United States.⁵⁴

B. Lack of Unity as to Future Political Status

The great cultural and linguistic differences among the people of Micronesia and the great distances between the various islands have undermined a united political approach for Micronesia.⁵⁵ There is no unity of aspiration.

On 15 May 1973 Ambassador Franklin Haydn Williams said:

It is not easy to determine what the people of Micronesia really want. There are wide differences of opinion on the future political status question within Micronesia. Some want to maintain the status quo, the trusteeship, feeling that they are not as yet ready to decide on their future. Some want closer association with the United States and have asked that the Commonwealth offer be reconsidered. Some want a somewhat looser relationship with the United States; that is, free association. Some want a permanent association. Some want only a short-term association en route to still another status, and some want full independence now. These differences between districts and within districts is mirrored in the Congress of Micronesia and even within the JCPS.⁵⁶

C. Political Status Alternatives

Possible political status alternatives for Micronesia are: (1) Independence, (2) Free Association, (3) Commonwealth, and (4) Status Quo. Independence and status quo are on the opposite ends of the spectrum with free association and commonwealth falling somewhere in between. Independence would result in a complete break with the United States. Free association would result in a loose relationship with the United States with a unilateral right of either party to terminate. Commonwealth would insure close and continual association with the United States. Status quo would continue United States control over Micronesia under a United Nations strategic trusteeship. An analysis of each alternative will be made from the viewpoint of the United States to determine the feasibility of each alternative.

The advantages of independence are: (1) Self-government for Micronesia and (2) United States would be relieved

of having to annually subsidize Micronesia the sum of some sixty million dollars. The disadvantages of independence are: (1) Lack of unity due to great differences in culture and languages and great distances between islands. (2) Economic insufficiency due to a slender resources base. Imports are approximately ten times exports. Less than ten per cent of the budget is raised currently by taxation in Micronesia. (3) Huge government costs due to heavy cost of education, public health, transportation, communications, social services and public works. (4) Denial of United States use of the islands for military bases. (5) Possible use of Micronesia by a hostile power.

The advantages of free association are: (1) Use of the islands by the United States for military bases. (2) Micronesians will have self-government in internal affairs. (3) United States would fulfill its obligation under the Trusteeship Agreement to promote Micronesian self-government. The disadvantages of free association are that it could be terminated unilaterally by Micronesia and that the United States would have to continue to subsidize Micronesia annually the sum of some sixty million dollars.

The advantages of commonwealth are: (1) Use of islands by the United States for military bases; (2) limited self-government for Micronesia; and (3) Marianas want commonwealth status. The disadvantages of commonwealth are that the United States offer of commonwealth status was rejected by COM in 1970 and that the United States would have to continue

to provide an annual subsidy of approximately sixty million dollars.

The advantages of the status quo are: (1) Use of islands by the United States for military bases; (2) provide Micronesians with more time to determine what they really want. The disadvantages of the status quo are: (1) United States would not fulfill its obligation under the Trusteeship Agreement of promoting Micronesian self-government. (2) Only one of two trusteeship left of eleven created at the end of World War II. Australia's trusteeship over the Territory of New Guinea is scheduled to end next year.⁵⁷ (3) Continued United States annual subsidy of approximately sixty million dollars will be required.

Independence would be more palatable to the United States if the United States can be assured that Micronesia would not fail on account of economic insufficiency and if a separate agreement for United States basing rights could be agreed on beforehand. Free association with unilateral right of termination would be more palatable to the United States if there was an agreement which would provide for a continuation of United States basing rights and other security interests in the event of and following termination of the free association relationship. Commonwealth is only viable for the Marianas, the other five districts will probably go for free association. Status quo would result in loss of United States world prestige among the developing nations due to charges of colonialism.

The most probable political status which will be agreed on is commonwealth status for Marianas and free association for the other five districts. This will be the best that the United States will be able to negotiate. While it would be better to have a common political status for all of Micronesia, the difference in Micronesian aspirations will preclude it. The Congress of the United States, COM, and the people of Micronesia will approve the two negotiated political status for the Marianas and for the other five districts. The United Nations will go along with a divided Micronesia.

D. Conclusion

Micronesia is a suitable political alternative for Okinawa because the United States is assured of the use of Micronesia for military bases. Emotional and political pressures, which are building up, to get the United States out of Okinawa make it wise for the United States to look to Micronesia in order to maintain its strategic position in the western Pacific.

VI. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Summary

Micronesia is a suitable alternative for Okinawa from both the military and political viewpoints. Micronesia is a suitable military alternative for Okinawa because of its strategic location and because it has islands large enough

to accomodate all of the existing United States military facilities on Okinawa. Micronesia is a suitable political alternative for Okinawa because the United States is assured of the use of Micronesia for military bases.

B. Recommendations

The United States should plan to use selected islands of Micronesia along with Guam as its forward defense position in the western Pacific. These islands should be fortified so that they form with Guam a mutually supporting base network from which large scale offensive operations can be mounted. Existing facilities whenever possible should be used to lessen construction costs. Construction of military facilities on the selected islands should begin soon.

The United States should seek agreement with the Micronesians as to their future political status now, while the independence movement is still weak. The United States should pursue a course of action which would assure the United States of the use of Micronesia for military bases. The United States should work for some form of political association with Micronesia.


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57. Oberdorfer, p. 11F.

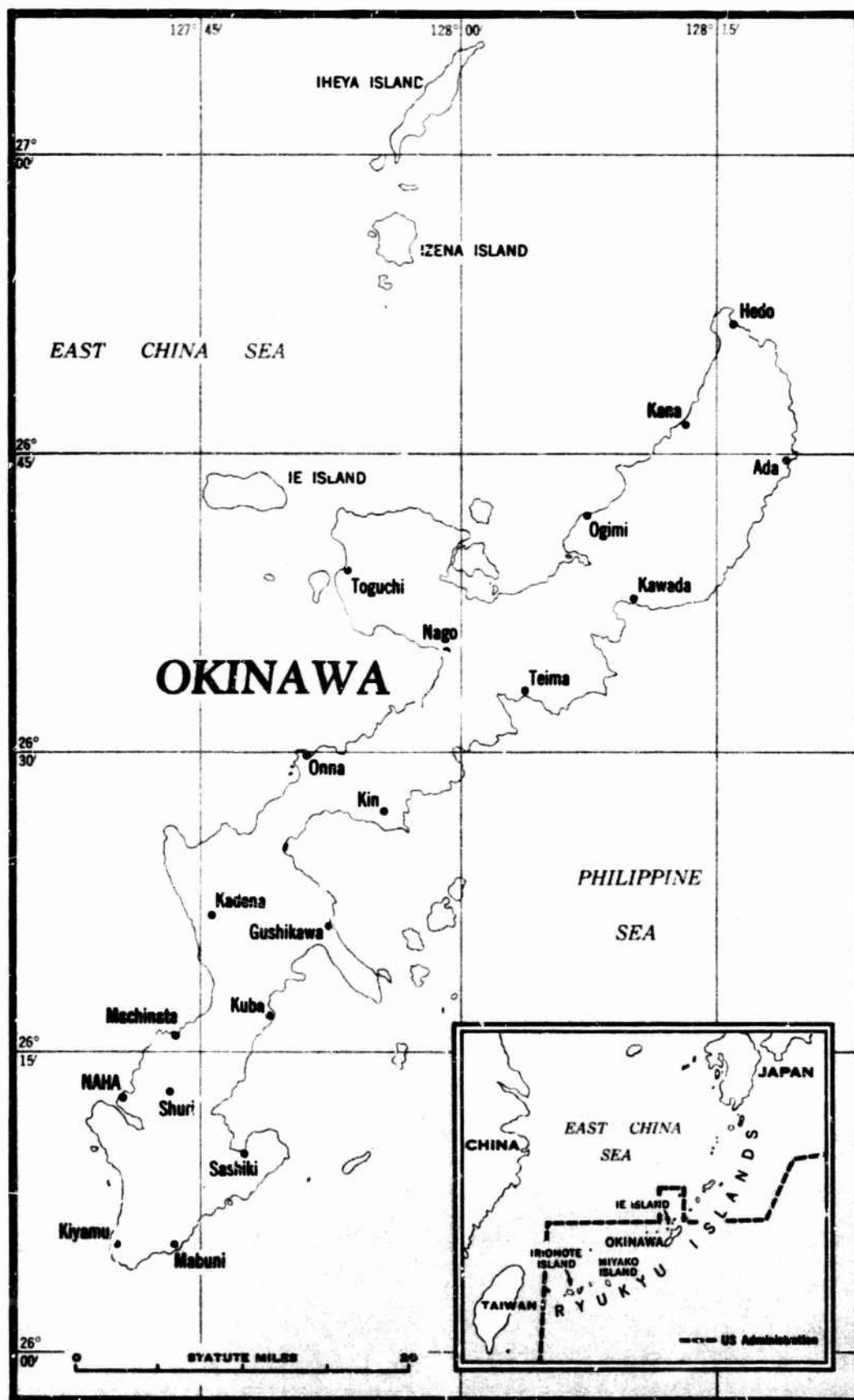
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APPENDIX A



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APPENDIX C

